

Biographies of Key Chinese Military Officers:

PLA General Staff Deputy Chief Lt. General Qi Jianguo,
PLA Navy Commander Admiral Wu Shengli,
and Key PLA Navy South Sea Fleet Officers

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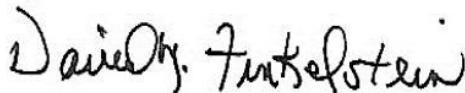
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Biographies

This document provides the biographies of the Deputy Chief of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff, Lt. General Qi Jianguo; Commander of the PLA Navy, Admiral Wu Shengli; and key officers in the PLA Navy's South Sea Fleet.

Lt. Gen Qi Jianguo (戚建国)

Position: Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff, Intelligence and Foreign Affairs (2012-Present)

Grade: Military Region Leader (Grade 3)

Lt. General Qi Jianguo was born 1952 in Wending, Shandong Province. Qi is one of the few PLA leaders to have actual war fighting experience: he participated in the Battle of Laoshan, a border skirmish between China and Vietnam that took place in 1984.¹ After joining the PLA in the 1970, Qi rose through the ranks of the 1st Group Army in Nanjing. He held billets such as training staff, platoon leader, and deputy division leader. In 2000 he was promoted to Chief of Staff for the 1st Group Army. In 2001 Qi was promoted to Commander of the 12th Group Army, also in Nanjing. After one year, he was promoted to the rank of Major General.²



In 2005, Qi was assigned to the General Staff Department where he directed the Operations Department (the PLA near-analogue to the U.S. Joint Staff J-3), which is responsible for the plans and operations of all PLA services. According to *Nanfang Dushi Bao*, a Guangzhou daily paper affiliated with the Guangdong Party committee, Qi led disaster relief efforts following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake.³ In December 2008, he became Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff. In 2010 Qi achieved the rank of Lieutenant General.⁴ In 2012, he replaced General Ma Xiaotian as the Deputy Chief of the General Staff with responsibility for Intelligence and Foreign Affairs. Qi was a delegate to the 17th People's Congress and is a full member of the 18th CPC Central Committee.⁵ He was also a delegate to both the 10th and 11th National People's Congress (NPC).⁶

¹ Li Xiaokun, "Military reshuffles its major positions," *Qiushi*, 26 October 2010, http://english.qstheory.cn/news/201210/t20121026_189359.htm

² Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Qi Jianguo," *National Taiwan Chengchi University*, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=5938>.

³ Chen Baocheng, "High Level of General Staff Gets New 'Four-in-One' Model in Personnel Reshuffle," *Nanfang Dushi Bao*, 31 December 2009, OSC, CPP20091231710005

⁴ "Qi Jianguo is Promoted to Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Will Meet with Finland General" (*Qi jianguo zhongjiang shengren fuzong canmozhang hui jian fenlan jianghun*; 戚建国中将升任副总参谋长 会见芬兰将军) *China.com*, 22 October 2012, http://news.china.com.cn/live/2012-10/22/content_16761723.htm

⁵ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Qi Jianguo," *National Taiwan Chengchi University*, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=5938>; "List of Members of the 18th CPC Central Committee," *Xinhua*, 14 November 2012, OSC, CPP20121114968273

⁶ Kang Geng, "Minutes of Discussion of NPC Deputies and CPPCC Members from the PLA," *PLA Daily*, 06 March 2006, OSC, CPP20060306502010; Huang Chao, "Difficulties Cannot Stop China From Marching Ahead -- National

Since joining the General Staff Department, and especially since replacing General Ma Xiaotian's portfolio, Lt. General Qi has had increasing opportunities to interact with foreign counterparts. In December 2012, shortly after assuming his new position, LTG Qi led the PLA delegation to the regularly-held Defense Consultative Talks with the Department of Defense, held in Washington at that time. According to Xinhua, in addition to his interactions with USD(P) James Miller, others in OSD and the Joint Staff, Qi also had interactions with officials from the State Department, the Pacific Command, and the Department of the Navy.

ADM Wu Shengli (吴胜利)

Position: Commander, PLA Navy (2006-Present)

Grade: Central Military Commission Member (Grade 2)

Admiral Wu Shengli was born in 1945 in Wuqiao County, Hebei Province, about 200 miles south of Beijing. He is the son of Wu Xian, who served as a Red Army political commissar during the War of Anti-Japanese Resistance (1937-1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), and who subsequently held important political positions during the Mao years, including mayor of the city of Hangzhou and vice governor of Zhejiang Province. Due to his parentage, ADM Wu is considered a "princeling (*taizi*; 太子)" in Chinese political parlance.⁷



Wu earned a degree in oceanography from the Surveying and Mapping College of the People's Liberation Army in 1966, just before the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) swept China and largely shut down the country's higher education system. He did not undergo naval officer courses until six years later, when he began the captain's course at the Dalian Vessel Academy.⁸

In the 1970s and 1980s, Wu gained experience as the captain of PLAN frigates and destroyers. From 1984 to 1992, he served as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Naval Base, a major support base for the East Sea Fleet located at the mouth of the Yangtze River. During that time, future president of China Jiang Zemin was serving as Shanghai Party Secretary. This has led to speculation by at least one China-watcher that Wu may have cultivated ties with Jiang.⁹ This sort of speculation, of course, is rarely verifiable.

In 1992, Wu became Chief of Staff of the Fujian support base in the East Sea Fleet. In 1994, at age 49, he was appointed Commandant of the Dalian Vessel Academy, his alma mater. He was also promoted to Rear Admiral. Wu rejoined the East Sea Fleet as a Deputy Commander in 1998. In 2002, he was

People's Congress Delegates From the Military Passionately Comment on Government Work Report," *PLA Daily*, 06 March 2011, OSC, CPP20110307787015

⁷ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Wu Shengli," National Taiwan Chengchi University, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=2787>. In China, "princelings" are viewed as a distinct political class who enter public service, business, or the military with major career advantages based on their families' prestige.

⁸ Cheng Li, "Wu Shengli," Brookings Institute, 2012, http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china/top-future-leaders/wu_shengli.

⁹ Ibid.

appointed Commander of the South Sea Fleet. He was promoted to Vice Admiral one year later. In 2004, Wu was assigned to Beijing to assume duties as a Deputy Chief of the General Staff, a Grade 3 position that made him the second-highest-ranking operational officer in the PLAN.¹⁰

Wu was named PLAN Commander in 2006 when terminal illness forced his predecessor, Admiral Zhang Dingfa, to step down. He has presided over the PLA Navy during a time of expanding Chinese maritime interests, increasing regional tensions, and diversifying missions for the PLAN. In the course of Admiral Wu's career, the Chinese naval service has grown from a "brown water" coastal defense force to one that now operates throughout China's three near seas (Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea) and which is increasingly operating beyond. Wu's tenure has been marked by a litany of achievements and historic firsts. These include the PLAN's first deployment of a counter-piracy task force to the Gulf of Aden in 2008, the successful preparation and execution of the PLAN's 60th anniversary fleet review in 2009, the PLAN's first evacuation of Chinese nationals from a distant country during the 2011 Libya crisis, and the commissioning of China's first aircraft carrier in 2012.

In the run up to the 18th Communist Party Congress in November 2012, some PLA-watchers expected that Wu would be named to an even-higher-profile post, such as Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission or Defense Minister.¹¹ However, after the Party Congress Wu remained PLAN Commander. As a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the CCP's equivalent of the U.S.'s National Command Authority, Wu has no known mandatory retirement age. However, he is currently the oldest member of the CMC (at age 68) and PLA-watchers suspect he will retire during or shortly before the next Party Congress in 2017.¹² He remains a member of the 18th CPC Central Committee. According to those who have met him, Admiral Wu enjoys playing golf.

¹⁰ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Wu Shengli."

¹¹ See Cheng Li, "China's Midterm Jockeying: Gearing Up for 2012," *China Leadership Monitor*, 2012, <http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM33CL.pdf> PAGE 33; Cmdr. Thomas Henderschedt and Lt. Col. Chad Sbragia, "China's naval ambitions: 10 myths America holds about China," *Armed Forces Journal*, September 2010, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2010/09/4696227/>; You Ji, *The Upcoming PLAAF Leadership Transition* (Beijing: NDU Press, 2012).

¹² There is no known official mandatory retirement ages for Central Military Commission members. However, they customarily retire between ages 68 and 70. See: Allen, Kenneth. "Assessing the PLA's Promotion Ladder to CMC Member Based on Grades vs. Ranks – Part 1," *Jamestown China Brief*, 22 July 2010, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36660&cHash=6a2a53d9c8 or Allen, Kenneth W., with James Bellacqua and Julia Rosenfield, *China's Navy 2007*, (Washington DC: Office of Naval Intelligence, March 2007)

VADM Jiang Weilie (蒋伟烈)

Position: Commander, South Sea Fleet (2010-Present)

Grade: Military Region Deputy Leader (Grade 4)

VADM Jiang Weilie was born in 1955 in East China's Jiangsu Province.¹³

In the 1990s, VADM Jiang served as captain of the Luda destroyer *Zunyi*, which took part in live-fire exercises during the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996.¹⁴ He later served as Deputy Commander of the Shanghai Naval Support Base before being appointed Deputy Commandant of the Naval Command Academy in 2004. In 2005, he was promoted to Deputy Commander of the East Sea Fleet's Zhoushan support base. In 2007 he was promoted to Commander of the North Sea Fleet's Lushun support base. Within a year he was promoted yet again, to Chief of Staff of the East Sea Fleet.¹⁵ While in this position, he accompanied former Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) General Xu Caihou on a delegation to the United States, which included meetings with former U.S. Defense Secretary Gates.¹⁶



In February 2010 Jiang began a 10-month assignment as Director of the PLAN Equipment Department. According to Hong Kong newspaper *Ta Kung Pao*, while serving as Director of the Equipment Department, Jiang reformed the PLAN's weapons acquisition system, a goal allegedly promulgated by the CMC.¹⁷ In December of that year, Jiang became Commander of the South Sea Fleet and concurrently Deputy Commander of the Guangzhou Military Region. Within three years (2007-2010), Jiang had risen from a grade 7 to a grade 4, a rapid career progression.¹⁸

A 2012 article in *Global People*, a PRC tabloid published by *People's Daily*, contains some interesting but unverifiable commentary on Jiang and his political commissar, Wang Dengping:

- It quotes Chinese military academics as saying that the appointment of Jiang and Wang to lead the South Sea Fleet was an indication of China's "firm resolve to safeguard its maritime rights and territorial integrity," and "can be viewed as a signal of more active Chinese responses to South China Sea issues."
- The authors describe Jiang as "a man of action who knows military and war affairs."

¹³ "China: Report Profiles New PLA Navy Leaders," U.S. Department of Defense, 25 February 2011, CPP, CPP20110225563002.

¹⁴ Su Tan and Long Xia, "The Two Valiant Generals Who Guard South China Sea," *Global People*, 26 July 2012, OSC translation, CPP20130104578002.

¹⁵ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Jiang Weilie," *National Taiwan Chengchi University*, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=7377>.

¹⁶ Peter J. Brown, "Chinese General on a Long March," *Asia Times*, 02 November 2009, OSC, CPP20091103715029.

¹⁷ Ma Haoliang, "High-Ranking Officer Adjustments in the Navy with a Focus on Having a Technologically Strong Military," *Ta Kung Pao*, 9 February 2011, OSC translation, CPP20110209787005.

¹⁸ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Jiang Weilie," *National Taiwan Chengchi University*, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=7377>.

- The article quotes a scholar from the Academy of Military Sciences as saying that both Jiang and Wang had expertise in the application of information technology (IT) to command and control, and that both possessed a “more hardline military position.”¹⁹

In recent years, Jiang has also developed strong political credentials. In 2012, he was elected as an alternate to the 18th Communist Party Central Committee. Central Committee alternates are listed by the order of votes they received. Jiang’s position was relatively high, 57th out of 171.²⁰ VADM Jiang will reach retirement age for his grade in 2018.

VADM Wang Dengping (王登平)

Position: Political Commissar, South Sea Fleet (2012-Present)

Grade: Military Region Deputy Leader (Grade 4)

South Sea Fleet Political Commissar VADM Wang Dengping was born in 1952 in Feixi County in East China’s Anhui Province.²¹ Wang holds a master’s degree in political science from the CCP’s Central Party School in Beijing.²²

Wang joined the PLA in 1970, in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, and served as a platoon leader before becoming a political officer. Wang spent part of his career in Beijing in the General Political Department’s Propaganda Department, first as Deputy Director of an unidentified bureau, and then as Director of that bureau.²³



Afterward, he joined the PLAN as Deputy Political Commissar of the North Sea Fleet’s Qingdao support base.²⁴ In 2002, Wang embarked on a PLAN expedition that circumnavigated the globe. He worked closely with the commander of this expedition, current PLAN deputy commander VADM Ding Yiping. Wang later wrote an article describing the experience entitled, “The Chinese People’s Navy’s First Around-The-World Voyage.”²⁵

¹⁹ Su Tan and Long Xia, “The Two Valiant Generals Who Guard South China Sea,” *Global People*, 26 July 2012, OSC translation, CPP20130104578002.

²⁰ “List of Alternate Members of 18th CPC Central Committee,” Xinhua, 14 November 2012, CPP, CPP20121114968271.

²¹ “Wang Dengping: I Witnessed the PLA Navy’s First Voyage Around the World” (*Wang dengping: wo jianzheng le zhongguo shouci huaniu hangxing*; 王登平：我见证了中国海军首次环球航行) Xinhua, 08 April 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2008-08/04/content_8938142.htm

²² “China: Report Profiles Guangzhou Military Region Deputy Political Commissar (PC) and South Sea Fleet PC, Wang Dengping,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, 28 September 2012, OSC, CPP20121004440001.

²³ “Wang Dengping: I Witnessed the PLA Navy’s First Voyage Around the World” (*Wang dengping: wo jianzheng le zhongguo shouci huaniu hangxing*; 王登平：我见证了中国海军首次环球航行) Xinhua, 08 April 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2008-08/04/content_8938142.htm

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Wang Dengping, “The Chinese People’s Navy’s First Around-The-World Voyage,” *Inheritance and Innovation (Chuancheng)*, no. 11, 2009.

In 2003, Wang was promoted to Political Commissar of the North Sea Fleet's Qingdao support base. From 2006 to 2009, Wang served as Political Commissar of the PLAN Equipment Department.²⁶ In 2009, Wang became Political Commissar of the North Sea Fleet. In 2012, he was assigned to the South Sea Fleet.²⁷ With this move, Wang became the only currently serving political officer in the PLAN to have served as commissar of two different fleets. As a vice admiral, he is also the highest-ranking of the three current fleet commissars. Wang is also a deputy to the National People's Congress.²⁸

A 2012 article in *Global People*, a PRC tabloid published by *People's Daily*, had some interesting but unconfirmed commentary about Wang's assignment to the South Sea Fleet:

- It quotes Chinese military academics as saying that the appointments of Wang and Jiang Weilie as Political Commissar and Commander respectively of the South Sea Fleet was an indication of China's "firm resolve to safeguard its maritime rights and territorial integrity," and "can be viewed as a signal of more active Chinese responses to South China Sea issues."
- It quotes Senior Colonel Li Jie of the Academy of Military Sciences (AMS) as saying that, in light of China's disputes with its neighbors in the South China Sea and increasing interference by the United States, the South Sea Fleet needed someone with "strong capabilities to control, respond, and handle issues in all aspects," and that Wang's experience made him "more suitable for responding."
- The article quotes a scholar from the Academy of Military Sciences as saying that both Jiang and Wang had expertise in the application of information technology (IT) to command and control, and that both possessed a "more hardline military position."²⁹

Around the same time, the Hong Kong daily *South China Morning Post* described Wang as "famously hawkish."³⁰

In 2009, Wang told *Chinanews*, "We do care about the South Sea issue. We cannot let the territory shrink in our hands. We cannot lose the 3-million-square-kilometer territorial waters while protecting them."³¹ That same year, he told Hong Kong media, "From a military perspective, [China's] sovereignty over its maritime territories cannot be taken away – not even a single inch of it. We must defend it. We cannot

²⁶ Center for Chinese Studies, "Profile of Wang Dengping," *National Taiwan Chengchi University*, <http://ics.nccu.edu.tw/chinaleaders/profile.php?id=7286>.

²⁷ "PLA Maneuvers on the Eve of the 18th Party Congress," *Ta Kung Pao*, 12 July 2012.

²⁸ Su Tan and Long Xia, "The Two Valiant Generals Who Guard South China Sea," *Global People*, 26 July 2012, OSC translation, CPP20130104578002.

²⁹ Su Tan and Long Xia, "The Two Valiant Generals Who Guard South China Sea," *Global People*, 26 July 2012, OSC translation, CPP20130104578002.

³⁰ Teddy Ng, "Hawkish Commander Heads South Sea Fleet," *South China Morning Post*, 10 July 2012, OSC, CPP20120710572047.

³¹ Zong Chenliang, "Navy Armament Department Political Commissar: Territory Shall Not Shrink under Our Protection," *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, 9 March 2009, OSC translation, CPP20090309004015.

lose it.”³² He was also quoted on several instances in the wake of the USNS *Impeccable* incident (2009), asserting China’s right to regulate military activities in its exclusive economic zone.³³

Wang has had experience meeting with high-level foreign dignitaries and military leaders. He accompanied former General Political Department Director General Li Jinai on two separate delegations: one to New Zealand and Chile in 2010 and one to North Korea in 2011.³⁴ Additionally, he participated in a high-level delegation to Sri Lanka and India in 2012, which was led by former Minister of Defense General Liang Guanglie.³⁵ Wang will reach retirement age for his grade in 2015.

RADM Wei Xueyi (魏学义)

Position: Chief of Staff, South Sea Fleet (2010-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Leader (Grade 5)

RADM Wei Xueyi is a submariner. From 2001 to 2008, he commanded the South Sea Fleet’s 32nd Submarine Division (*zhidui*).³⁶ In 2006, Wei’s division participated in a lengthy exercise which, according to the PLA’s “Military Report” program on CCTV, broke several PLAN records.³⁷

In 2008, Wei was promoted to Commandant of the Submarine Academy in Qingdao. Two years later, he became Chief of Staff of the South Sea Fleet.³⁸ In late 2010, Wei led a three-ship formation on a visit to Indonesia.³⁹

In November 2011, Wei was appointed Commander of the 6th Gulf of Aden escort mission. During this expedition, the PLAN traveled to Saudi Arabia for the first time.⁴⁰



³² “Newscast,” Hong Kong Cable TV News Two, 9 March 2009, OSC translation, CPP20090309715061.

³³ “China: Report Profiles Guangzhou Military Region Deputy Political Commissar (PC) and South Sea Fleet PC, Wang Dengping,” U.S. Department of Defense, 28 September 2012, OSC, CPP20121004440001.

³⁴ “JFJB: ‘Li Jinai Concludes Visit To Chile and New Zealand,’ PLA Daily, 13 September 2010, OSC Product ID: CPP20100914702003; “Talks Between Military Delegations of DPRK, China Held,” KCNA, 15 November 2011, OSC, KPP20111115971167.

³⁵ Shi Ren, “First Visit to India by PRC Defense Minister for 8 Years, to Eliminate Military Suspicions and Boost Mutual Trust,” *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, 5 September 2012, OSC translation, CPP20120905047004.

³⁶ *Directory of Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

³⁷ “Military Report,” CCTV-7, 11 November 2006, OSC summary, CPM20070108017001.

³⁸ *Directory of Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

³⁹ “Chinese Navy Fleet Visits Indonesia,” Xinhua, 27 December 2010, OSC, CPP20101227056001.

⁴⁰ “Chinese Naval Vessels Visit Saudi Arabia for First Time,” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, 27 November 2010, OSC summary, CPP20101127136007.

RADM Yao Zhilou (么志楼)

Position: Deputy Commander, South Sea Fleet (2009-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Leader (Grade 5)

From 2002 to 2004, RADM Yao Zhilou commanded the South Sea Fleet's Zhanjiang support base.⁴¹ Afterwards, he was promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff for the South Sea Fleet.



In 2009, Yao was promoted to Deputy Commander of the South Sea Fleet.⁴² In this position, he took part in a PLA delegation to Brunei and Japan led by former Deputy Chief of the General Staff General Ge Zhenfeng.⁴³ Soon afterwards, he was appointed Commander of the 2nd Gulf of Aden expedition.⁴⁴ On its way back to China, this mission made a port visit in Cochin, India.⁴⁵

In May 2011, Yao accompanied former Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie on a delegation that traveled to Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines.⁴⁶

In 2002, Yao was a PLAN delegate to the 16th Communist Party Congress.⁴⁷

RADM Wang Changjiang (王长江)

Position: Deputy Commander, South Sea Fleet (2012-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Leader (Grade 5)

RADM Wang Changjiang has spent much of his career in naval aviation. From 2001 to 2005, he served as Deputy Commander of the East Sea Fleet's 4th Naval Aviation Division. In 2005, he became Commander of the division.⁴⁸

Wang was assigned to the PLAN Equipment Department in 2006, and served as a Deputy Director for three years. In 2009, he became Deputy Commander of the



⁴¹ "China: Report Profiles New South Sea Fleet Leaders," U.S. Department of Defense, 3 February 2009, OSC, CPP20090203563001.

⁴² *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

⁴³ "Ge Zhenfeng Visits Japan and Brunei," Xinhua, 17 February 2009, OSC, CPP20090218702004.

⁴⁴ "Chinese Flotilla Sails To Relieve Ships in Somalia Anti-Piracy Mission," Xinhua, 2 April 2009, OSC, CPP20090402968105.

⁴⁵ Cao Haihua, "Shenzhen' Warship Visits India," *PLA Daily*, 10 August 2009, OSC translation, CPP20090811702002.

⁴⁶ "Chinese Defense Minister Leaves for Southeast Asia Tour," Xinhua, 15 May 2011, OSC, CPP20110515968048.

⁴⁷ "China: Report Profiles New South Sea Fleet Leaders," U.S. Department of Defense, 3 February 2009, OSC, CPP20090203563001.

⁴⁸ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

East Sea Fleet's naval aviation unit. The next year, Wang returned to Beijing to serve as a Deputy Chief of Staff of the PLAN.⁴⁹

Wang was appointed in 2012 to serve as Deputy Commander of the South Sea Fleet and, concurrently, commander of the South Sea Fleet naval aviation unit.⁵⁰

RADM Guan Jianguo (管建国)

Position: Deputy Chief of Staff, South Sea Fleet (2010-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Deputy Leader (Grade 6)

In 2005, RADM Guan Jianguo became Chief of Staff of the South Sea Fleet's Guangzhou support base. In 2006, he was promoted to Commander of the Zhanjiang support base, also in the South Sea Fleet. He remained there for four years before making a lateral move to become a Deputy Chief of Staff of the South Sea Fleet in 2010.⁵¹

In 2011, Guan was appointed commander of the 9th Gulf of Aden escort mission. This mission included port visits to Singapore, Kuwait, and Oman.⁵²



RADM Li Shihong (李士红)

Position: Deputy Chief of Staff, South Sea Fleet (2011-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Deputy Leader (Grade 6)

RADM Li Shihong spent five years as the Director of the Military Affairs Department at PLAN headquarters before being promoted to South Sea Fleet Deputy Chief of Staff in 2011.⁵³ In this position, he commanded the 10th Gulf of Aden mission. After the escort mission was finished, the task force docked in Hong Kong to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China.⁵⁴

While in Hong Kong, Li was quoted as saying to Hong Kong media that it is



⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

⁵² Yang Qinggang and Li De, "Chinese Naval Taskforce Concludes Visit to Singapore," *PLA Daily*, 21 December 2011, OSC translation, CPP20111222702001; "Chinese Warships Visit Oman for Goodwill Visit," Xinhua, 4 December 2011, OSC, CPP20111204968106.

⁵³ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

⁵⁴ Gao Fei, "10th Chinese Naval Escort Taskforce Crosses Equator," *PLA Daily*, 26 March 2012, OSC, CPP20120327702008; "Chinese 10th Naval Escort Taskforce To Dock in Hong Kong," *PLA Daily*, 20 April 2012, OSC, CPP20120421702018

“beyond a doubt” that Huangyan Island is China’s territory, and that “as long as the Party central leadership and the Central Military Commission make the decision (regarding Huangyan Island), the Navy will certainly fulfill the missions.”⁵⁵

RADM Li Xiaoyan (李晓岩)

Position: Deputy Chief of Staff, South Sea Fleet (2012-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Deputy Leader (Grade 6)

According to PRC-owned Hong Kong magazine *Tzu Ching*, South Sea Fleet Deputy Chief of Staff RADM Li Xiaoyan was born in 1961 in Changchun, a city in Northeast China’s Jilin Province. He holds two bachelor’s degrees, the first of which he received from the Air Force No. 8 Flight Academy in 1979.⁵⁶

While serving in the PLA Air Force, Li was invited to participate in a special training program designed to cultivate a new class of “high-caliber” navy captains. The program, which took place at the Guangzhou Naval Vessel Academy, reportedly taught aviators how to command surface combatants.⁵⁷ Li graduated from the program with his second bachelor’s degree in 1987.⁵⁸



At the age of 30, Li served on his first destroyer, *Nanchang*, as a deputy captain. In 1995, he was promoted to captain of the frigate *Jiangmen*.⁵⁹ One year later, he was sent to Russia’s N.G. Kuznetsov Naval Academy to study advanced naval theory and equipment. He graduated in 1999 with a master’s degree. His thesis, which Xinhua claims was written entirely in Russian, was entitled “Vessel Formation for Naval Attack Operations.”⁶⁰

After returning to China, Li became captain of the destroyer *Shenzhen*. In 2000, he took *Shenzhen* on a lengthy deployment to Southeast Asia and Africa. The 65-day mission reportedly broke many PLA records: it was the first time the PLAN crossed three oceans in one trip; the first time a Chinese ship crossed the Indian Ocean; the first time a PLAN ship passed the Cape of Good Hope; and the first time PLAN visited Africa. A Xinhua article describing the expedition remarked, “Li Xiaoyan presented to the

⁵⁵ “HK Video: PLA Navy Ships Visit Hong Kong After Finishing Escort Mission,” OSC, 30 April 2012, CPP20120501572021; Yu Dong, “The War of Aquino III,” *Southern Weekend*, 11 May 2012, OSC, CPP20120514787017

⁵⁶ Yu Wen, “China’s Aircraft Carrier Commander Will Come From Among ‘Captain Pilots,’” *Tzu Ching*, 1 August 2011, OSC translation, CPP20110808787002.

⁵⁷ In 2004 the Guangzhou Naval Vessel Academy changed its name to the Navy Service Arms Command Academy.

⁵⁸ Teddy Ng, “Warship Chief Tipped To Captain Aircraft Carrier,” *South China Morning Post*, 3 August 2011, OSC, CPP20110803715044.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Li Chenghua, Chen Wanjun, and Li Xiangdong, “Proud, Valiant Fighters of the Ocean – Profiles of Outstanding Vessel Captains With Doctor’s and Master’s Degrees on a Certain Destroyer Flotilla of the Navy (Parts 1 and 2),” Xinhua, 02 April 2001, OSC translation, CPP20010402000120.

world a bright and brave image of a Chinese vessel captain navigating a new-type warship, crossing the ocean, and going to the world.”⁶¹

Li remained captain of *Shenzhen* until 2004, when he was promoted to Chief of Staff of the South Sea Fleet’s 9th Destroyer Division (*zhidui*). In 2007, he became Deputy Commander of the division. That same year, he commanded the Chinese side of a combined military exercise in the Malacca Strait. The exercise included ships from the United States, Canada, Japan, Pakistan, Korea, and Singapore.⁶²

In 2012, there was speculation in the Hong Kong and Chinese press that Li would be selected to command China’s first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*.⁶³ Instead, Li was promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff of the South Sea Fleet and was later appointed commander of the 13th Gulf of Aden mission.⁶⁴

Li will reach retirement age for his grade in 2016.

RADM Zhang Wendan (张文旦)

Position: Deputy Chief of Staff, South Sea Fleet (2009-Present)

Grade: Corps (Jun) Deputy Leader (Grade 6)

South Sea Fleet Deputy Chief of Staff RADM Zhang Wendan was born in 1958 in Fuyang County, in East China’s Anhui Province.⁶⁵

Zhang previously served as Director of a ship’s training center.⁶⁶ From 2004 to 2009, Zhang commanded the 26th Speedboat Division (*zhidui*) in the South Sea Fleet.⁶⁷

In 2009, Zhang was promoted to South Sea Fleet Deputy Chief of Staff. In this position, also in 2009, he commanded the PLAN’s first joint military-civilian search-and-rescue exercise with the Guangdong Provincial Government.⁶⁸



In the spring of 2010, Zhang was appointed commander of the 5th Gulf of Aden task force.⁶⁹ While in the Gulf of Aden, Zhang’s task force conducted a combined exercise with the Republic of Korea Navy.⁷⁰ The task force also conducted port visits in Egypt, Italy, Greece, Burma, and Singapore.⁷¹

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Chinese Frigate Arrives in Singapore for Multilateral Exercise,” Xinhua, 14 May 2007, OSC, CPP20070514150004.

⁶³ Chen Liangfei, “The Aircraft Carrier and the Future of China’s Navy,” *Oriental Morning Post*, 1 August 2011, OSC summary, CPP20110810047023; Li Wen, “Li Xiaoyan Has Been Slated To Become Captain of China’s First Aircraft Carrier,” *Tzu Ching*, 8 February 2012, OSC translation, CPP20120208787005.

⁶⁴ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

⁶⁵ “Biographies,” Fuyang County official website, January 2009, www.fuyang.gov.cn/...01.../bcef8604-e50d-4423-b15f-fb353722b441.doc.

⁶⁶ Jiang Minjun and Si Yanwen, “South Sea Fleet Training Center’s Rolling-type Group Training Speeds the Creation of Combat Power,” *PLA Daily*, 6 June 2002, OSC translation, CPP20020606000054.

⁶⁷ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, 2001 to 2011 editions.

⁶⁸ “Military Report,” CCTV-7, 10 July 2009, OSC Translation, CPM20090923035016.

⁶⁹ Cao Jinping and Cao Haihuai, “Commanders of the Chinese Navy's Escort Fleet Expound on Storms in the Gulf of Aden,” *China Youth Daily*, 16 April 2010, OSC translation, CPP20100416710006.

⁷⁰ Cao Jinping and Cao Haihua, “Chinese and ROK Escort Ships Conduct First Joint Exercises,” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, 14 May 2010, OSC summary, CPP20100514004011.

⁷¹ “Chinese Warships Depart Singapore,” Xinhua, 7 September 2010, OSC, CPP20100907053005.

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